

Only a little, shrivelled seed—
It might be flower, or grass or weed;
Only a box of earth on the edge
Of a narrow, dusty window ledge;
Only a few scant summer showers,
Only a few clear, shining hours,
That was all. Yet God could make
Out of these, for a sick child's sake,
A blossom-wonder as fair and sweet
As ever broke an angel's feet.

Only a life of barren pain
Wet with sorrowful tears for rain;
Warm sometimes by a wandering gleam
Of joy, that seemed but a happy dream;
A life as common and brown and bare
As the box of earth in the window there;
Yet it bore at last the precious bloom
Of a perfect soul in that narrow room—
Pure as the narrow leaves that fold
Over the flower's heart of gold.
—Henry Van Dyke.

TOWARD PARADISE.

BY JAMES KNAPP REEVE.

In the life of every man—at least of every man who really has known the true meaning of life—will be found a dead wall in which there is no open door. Behind that wall are written the things of which, perhaps, he may be neither ashamed nor afraid to have the world know, but any knowledge of which he yet will admit only to his own heart.

Erbeson had known life, so it is not strange that in his life was such a dead wall. Early in my acquaintance with the man it came to me to know that there were certain things about which I must not question him. Although he was one of the most genial and affable of men, one whom, through years of close companionship, I grew to know and value as a friend and to love as a brother—to know as one who placed more than an empty meaning upon the word "friend"—I found that he would not brook, even from me, any prying query as to the years of his younger manhood.

We were gold-hunters by profession. A fine, free, adventurous life it is, which lets one see every nook and corner of this round world, to know its hopes and fears, its joys and sorrows, the enthusiasm of hope and the rapture of expectation fulfilled, as well as the darkness and disaster of dread despair. Rich today, and tomorrow too poor to own a place wherein to lay one's head, it is not a bad life for a man who is filled with the wine of youth; but it is not a life for a married man, unless one is born under a fortunate star that makes him certain of luck wherever he goes.

It was early in our companionship when I learned that Erbeson had a wife, and it was at once matter of surprise for me that he did not abandon such a roving career as our occupation forced upon us and settle down to the quiet life of the home. It is true, from my point of view, he would have missed much by so doing. For the freedom of that life gets into one's blood, and a man who has known it cannot well brook restraint or be hedged within narrow bounds.

But Erbeson was no longer master of his fate, as I was, and he could afford the home, for he was the luckiest gold-hunter I ever knew. But this same luck made him able to take his wife with him wherever he journeyed and to establish her in quarters made comfortable and enriched with all that love and liberality could suggest. So it was that sometimes in the mining camps appeared a little oasis of civilization and in that oasis a woman, who seemed little less than an angel to the rough miners unaccustomed to the presence of femininity in their environment.

If Erbeson was a strange man, reticent and ever stoically keeping prying eyes from looking beyond that dead wall in his life, his wife was a stranger woman still.

I will not use empty, meaningless phrases in describing her. It may be said that she was beautiful. I do not know whether she was so by accepted standards, and at best the word is a weak one to apply to a woman such as she. But she had a pure olive skin, such as I have never seen upon any other woman, except now and then among the high-born dames of Andalusia. Under it at times was a glow of fire, as the blood coursed through the veins and surged to the surface of her oval face, that made me think of her as a living opal. I have never seen other eyes so deep as hers. In their depths one lost himself and wondered if it were not the very soul he saw looking out at him from those deep black living wells. Nor have I seen other hair so black, nor in which vitality seemed to so abound.

Nor was this all her charm. I have had speech with many nations of the earth, but rack my memory as I might, I could not tell what tongue it was that gave her that soft, caressing accent, that made every rough, harsh word of our uncouth English take upon itself a new meaning, that made one's pulses throb as though she had called one by some endearing name.

We were ten days out from San Francisco, we three—Erbeson, his wife and myself—bound for the Solomon islands. We had direct information (how it had been obtained I need not tell you) of the new discovery of yellow metal in one of the smaller islets of that group, and we were bound to be among the first there. Erbeson never was a laggard, and perhaps to that fact was due the other one to which I have already called your attention—that luck was never far distant from him. And I profited by his wisdom, and by the kindness that this older and more earnest man extended toward the youth whom he had made his friend.

As we neared the line the weather

became intensely hot, and we attempted little in the way of exercise or recreation except to loaf all day under the awnings, with pipes between our lips and unread novels in our hands. It was too hot to read, too hot to talk. The sea looked to us like a vast expanse of molten silver. Its surface was unstirred by any ripple, absolutely quiet except for the long swell upon which we rolled gently forward. No breath of air moved, no cloud marred the sky of brass above us. All nature was inert, and man, following her lead, but existed. For days we had been too dull to talk. We but waited, while the successive revolutions of our wheels drove us speedily nearer and nearer our goal.

Erbeson seemed even more inert than any other. Usually active and vigorous, he now scarcely moved or opened his lips from the coming up to the going down of the sun, except to remove his pipe from between them, or in the endeavor to drive away the overwhelming heat by swallowing the cooling mixture that his man brought him from time to time.

Consequently I was surprised one afternoon to see in his manner every indication that he was about to tell a story. We were nearing the Gilbert islands, and some one had spoken within our hearing of the curious practice of the natives there. Erbeson had listened, but had, after all, apparently not been sufficiently interested to take part in the talk. But that night, when we were alone upon the deck, with only the shimmering sea and the sparkling stars and the glorious, wonderful Southern Cross gleaming above to make us know we were still in and a part of the world, he drew his steamer chair up nearer mine and, taking his pipe from his lips and knocking the ashes out upon the deck, began quietly and without preface as follows:

"The strangest thing I ever knew in these waters," he said—I started at this, for I did not know he had ever been in the South Pacific before, except on a single voyage we had made together to Australia—"happened just about where we are now. I was in command of a schooner that had been cruising for a couple of months along these islands, picking up what we could in the way of spoil from the natives and perhaps not observing too closely the laws which govern trade and barter among civilized peoples. We had made a fairly profitable cruise and had gathered up some stuff, not of such great value in itself, but of a sort that is exchangeable for coin of the realm in the rich ports, and were about making for Honolulu to discharge our cargo. It had come on late into the afternoon, and I had gone into the cabin and was looking over my charts, leaving the mate on deck. I found the charts dull work and had fallen asleep when our Kanaka cabin boy touched me on the shoulder and said the mate wished to see me on deck.

"I went up and found him intently studying something afloat on the sea. He handed me the glass, saying nothing, but simply pointing at the object which had attracted him. I quickly made it out to be a small boat, but could not determine at all whether there was anyone in it. The mate saw my perplexity and answered my unspoken question.

"I think there is some one in it, sir; had we not better lower the cutter?"

"I raised the glass again and scanned the boat long and earnestly. There was something strange and eerie in its appearance. The sea was as white and still as it is at this hour. The boat seemed scarcely to rock upon its bosom. It was all white and made but faint contrast against the silver sheen upon which it rested. At times I fancied that it was not, and that it was but an illusion, such as will come but too often upon these hot, sunburnt seas.

"When I lowered the glass the Kanaka, with the easy familiarity which such boys are allowed on crafts of that sort, took it from me and gazed as earnestly toward the strange thing as I had done. When he handed the glass back he was trembling with fright.

"Don't go to it, sir!" he begged, his teeth chattering so that he could hardly utter the words. 'It's a dead-boat, and it will bring us bad luck if we touch it or if we interfere with it at all.'

"I turned to the mate for explanation.

"Sam thinks it is a burial-boat," he said; 'and, you know, these people never bury their dead, but just put them in a boat and send them adrift. Left alone, the boat drifts on to Paradise. If the boat is meddled with it

may be turned from its course, and then it drifts to the other place and carries its unlucky passenger along. And, then, too, the curse of the dead rests upon the one who did it.'

"I had taken the glass again and was looking intently at the boat. I could now distinguish a form in it at length and thought I could discover some movement. Of this I was finally certain.

"It may be a dead-boat," I said, 'but I think there is a live person in it.'

"We lowered the cutter, and I got in it myself, and we made toward the drifting boat. While we were yet at some distance I found I had been right, for a human arm was lifted and waved as if to attract our attention. But this ceased, and, as we drew nearer, all was so still that I began to have an uncanny feeling. The curious appearance of the boat added to this. It was perfectly white. A white awning was spread above it. There were white draperies in it and in the midst of these, as I could see when we drew beside it, a white face and form, outstretched and silent, as though dead. Remembering what the mate had said, I would have left it even then, but I was certain I had seen a movement of that white arm that lay there, naked, gleaming cold, like a piece of marble, beneath the heat of the tropical sun.

"In the boat, in a basket of rushes, were some yams and bread-fruit and pieces of cane, and as I saw these had been touched it gave me courage. I reached out my hand and clasped the arm. It did not feel like the flesh of one dead. I spoke, and the eyes opened and looked at me wonderingly.

Erbeson paused and smoked a moment meditatively.

"Perhaps I have not told you," he said, "that it was a very beautiful young girl who was lying there?"

"An olla of water was in the boat, and I poured some of this upon her face, and, when I saw that she was reviving, I lifted her from her ghostly craft into my own and made for the ship at once. My explanation of the matter," said Erbeson, bringing his narrative abruptly to an end, "was that the girl had been in a trance, and her people, thinking her dead, had started her on the road to Paradise."

Of course I wanted to know the rest of the story, but while I was thinking how to frame my question I observed Mrs. Erbeson watching me closely and as if she would speak. I waited for her words, liking always to hear the sweet music of her voice. "She found her way to Paradise," she said; "she has been in Paradise ever since. And now you will no longer think it curious, my friend,"—here she smiled upon me with her wonderful eyes—"that I care to be always with him who gave me life. And now that you know my story you will never again think me a strange woman?"

And I promised and, looking out upon the calm sea, breathed a wish that fate might serve me thus.—Popular Science Monthly.

Keep Snakes as Pets.

"There is a pet snake in nearly every house in Brazil," said a Chicagoan who has returned from a journey through that country. "They keep them just as we do cats or dogs, and, indeed, for much the same purpose, using them to kill the rats at night. The snakes are a species of boa from ten to fifteen feet long, and are perfectly harmless to mankind, while they are quite affectionate and, like cats, become attached to the house where they are kept. These snakes are sold in the markets, where I bought one that died on the voyage from Rio Janeiro to New York.

"A scientist, to whom I spoke of these snakes, told me that no snakes are really dangerous to man. He said that never had a snake attacked a man unless the man had first attacked it. The reptile is defensive, but not offensive, and has no desire to pick a quarrel. But if you tread on a snake the thing cannot know that your intentions are not inimical to your welfare. So I always avoid snakes."—Chicago Times-Herald.

Kien Long and His Physicians.

There used to be related a curious anecdote of old Kien Long, emperor of China. He was inquiring of Sir George Staunton the manner in which physicians were paid in England. When, after some difficulty, his majesty was made to comprehend the system, he exclaimed:

"Is any man well in England that can afford to be ill? Now I will inform you," said he, "how I manage my physicians. I have four, to whom the care of my health is committed. A certain weekly salary is allowed them, but the moment I am ill the salary stops till I am well again. I need not inform you that my illnesses are usually short."—Harper's Round Table.

Successful Operation.

"Doctor, was that operation on old Mr. Scadda a success?"

"A perfect success, sir."

"It was my impression that he died."

"Oh, yes, he did not survive; but the operation was eminently successful. We had been paid for it in advance."—Life.

EXECUTION OF INDIANS.

CREEKS WHO NEVER MISS THEIR ENGAGEMENTS TO BE SHOT.

A Point of Honor With Them and Their Families to Be on Hand at the Time Set for Their Taking Off—Case of Walla Tonka, the Ball Player.

Zack Mulhall, the most extensive farmer in the Indian Territory came up to St. Louis the other day on business connected with his stock interests says a letter to the New York Sun. He left his 10,000 acres of wheat land, much of which was planted in dollar wheat last season, to look after the sale of a lot of cattle, and incidentally to observe the movements of a stable of horses on which he has been making and losing money by turns for several months. While he was in St. Louis Colonel Zack, as nearly all the Southwest calls him, stopped talking about the farming future of his part of the world long enough to discuss the approaching execution of Walla Tonka, the Creek Indian who has been going about the country as a member of a baseball team in face of the fact that he is under sentence of death, and may be executed at any time in the district by the legal authorities. Walla Tonka was released on parole in order that he might help to win a ball game at Kansas City against a team of college players that had long been a rival of the Indian club of which Walla Tonka was an important player.

Walla Tonka's situation did not seem odd to Colonel Zack. Indeed, he was astonished that a thing so commonplace to him should have been considered worthy of sending about the country as a piece of news. He said that it was a very common occurrence among the Creek Indians for a man to receive a death sentence, and at the pleasure of the court resume regular duties and continue at them until the date of execution. On that day the convicted man, unaccompanied by an officer, never failed to be at the execution ground in good season to receive the death bullet. What was more remarkable, nobody of his kin ever interposed an objection. His squaw might shed a few tears over it, but that was all.

It seems that there is some tradition that instructs the full-blood Indian along these extraordinary lines. There is a well-rooted belief that the buck who balks at the conditions imposed upon him by the constituted authority of the tribe is unfit to traverse the happy hunting grounds. So he walks alone to the place of execution. He chats with his friends, eats heartily, and if there is anything to drink, he drinks. There is a line of men, all sure shots, either with bows or with modern guns, and they point their weapons at him. But the shot does not come from any one of these. There is, somewhere else, a sure-shot Indian who sends the fatal missile when the condemned man is not looking for it. Sometimes the gun is fired from a tent, so that the relatives of the dead Indian have no way of knowing the identity of the executioner.

Not so very long ago there was a brave missing on the day of his execution. Later he was found with a broken leg and half starved in a ravine. In trying to reach the execution ground he was riding at a rapid gait across the country and his pony fell on the young Indian. When he was brought into the village there was a general suspicion among the enemies of his family that he was not clean strain, and that the breaking of a leg was an intentional effort to escape punishment, whereupon the brave insisted upon a speedy sentence and execution. This followed at once, and with his broken leg the buck was led forward and shot.

Colonel Zack Mulhall says that the Indians who were sentenced to death by hanging by the late Judge Parker, at Fort Smith, were never in the slightest degree affected by the fact that they were about to die. The fearless manner in which they went to the scaffold was proof of that. But they loathed the manner of death. They never felt a pride in going by the white man's strangulation route. To die by bullet or arrow is an honorable ending. Yet many an Indian dangled at rope's end by order of Judge Parker, who will one day be written down as one of the greatest ministers for good that the Southwest has ever had. He sent scores of men to the gallows, but the very vigor of his method, sometimes cruel to all appearances, tended to prevent crime in that wickedest portion of the country.

Probably no better proof of the Creek Indian's devotion to the tradition of his people has ever been given than is furnished by an instance in which some circumstance or other kept a sentenced buck away from the execution ground when the time came for shooting. The young fellow was well liked in the tribe, and for that reason there was a great crowd present to witness his execution—a delicate compliment to the condemned man. The hour arrived and the Indian was not there. One minute past the time he rushed through the lines and took his place. There was a low grunt of approval from the assembled host. Rifles cracked and the young man fell dead. One minute later a

young girl rushed forward, and, throwing herself across the body of the dead man, exclaimed that it was not the accused who had been shot, but his younger brother, who resembled him in many ways. She was the betrothed of the dead man, and of course recognized him where the others, under the peculiar circumstances, did not. The younger brother, to preserve the honor of his people, and knowing that the condemned man could not or would not keep his faith, had rushed to take the absent one's place. Later the other man was duly executed, whether honorably or not cannot be told. This story is related by the Indians who do not as a rule speak on such subjects as death and justice and tradition.

MAKING DELICATE WIRES.

Some So Small That No Gauge Can Measure Them.

Gold wire is mentioned in connection with the decoration the sacerdotal robes of Aaron, it is true, yet the oldest pieces of wire of which the world has any knowledge, says Science Staffings, is a specimen made by the Ninevites some 800 years B. C. Solid gold drawn wire is now practically unknown in the trade. However, gold wire is made in the following manner: Silver rods are coated with gold in proportion of 2 per cent. of gold to the weight of silver so he manipulated. When the gilding is performed the rods are about 1 3/4 inches in diameter by two feet six inches long and weigh about 400 ounces each. The two metals are then drawn down together, first through steel dies and afterward through drilled rubies or diamonds. The process of drilling the gems is kept a secret. A better idea of the minuteness of some of these borings may, however, be learned from the fact, that the holes cannot be discerned by the naked eye, and only by the aid of a magnifying glass can one be convinced that they really exist.

For the manufacture of silver and silver gilt wires, the silver is sometimes bored out and internal copper rods inserted, and they are then drawn together. Wires as fine as a human hair, for example, .003 of an inch in diameter, and even finer, can be gauged by instruments termed "micrometers." The scales for weighing the gold coin at the mint are so exquisitely fine that they can detect the most minute particle added to either side of the balance. There are fine woven wire gauges and cloth, some of which are made with as many as 40,000 meshes to the square inch.

The more delicate classes of wires find application in scientific instruments. So fine are these that it is difficult to get them measured; but the task has been accomplished, and platinum wire has been drawn to 1-7000 of an inch, and to even greater fineness. Aluminum wire has been drawn as fine as 16,500 yards to the ounce, a size too fine to be practically measured by any gauge or instrument. While mentioning practical examples of fine-drawn wires, it may be stated that iron has been attenuated so that over two and a half miles in length only weighed one ounce. Again, twenty-four grains of gold has been drawn on a silver wire to a length of 120 miles.

Street Oratory in New York.

When one hears some rough, shirt-sleeved laborer explaining Ricardo's law of rent to a little crowd, or comparing the French impot unique of about a century ago to Henry George's economic theory of the single tax of the present day, one realizes that whatever other peculiar features these gatherings may have, they are not characterized by lack of brains and thought. When laughter or applause from some group indicates that a talker has scored a point attention is drawn his way. Men from nearer groups join that which surrounds him. This is his opportunity. Taking a deeper breath and expanding his chest, he raises his voice a trifle and gives it a more oratorical swing. Then he begins to use gestures, and his audience respectfully widens out to give him more room. For a while he holds its attention; then perhaps there begins a disintegration, until he ends with only the original crowd about him; sometimes with less.—Illustrated American.

Mixed in Construction.

A very old book, describing Toulouse, says: "It is a large town, containing 60,000 inhabitants, built entirely of brick." I have heard of a man who was a "brick," but I never heard of a community entirely built of brick. Doubtless they would be square and perhaps angular. There must be lots of corners, too, in Toulouse. Albany is described in an old book as "a city of 8000 houses and 20,000 inhabitants, with their gable ends to the street." Probably they were well "tilted." In these, however, the sense is clear, although the construction is mixed. It is otherwise with the answer of the old lady to the question what she thought of one of her neighbors by the name of Jones. She said: "Why, I don't like to say anything about my neighbors, but as to Mr. Jones, sometimes I think, and then again I don't know; but, after all, I guess he'll turn out to be a good deal such a sort of a man as I take him to be."—Boston Traveler.